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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

War Threat Real, Hill Leaders Told

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By Drew Pearson

Congressional leaders, who sat down with the President last week learned that the world was in a much more precarious position than appeared in the newspapers.

It was stated publicly afterward that the briefing was reassuring. Privately congressional leaders said just the opposite.



Pearson

Next week will tell whether the world will be plunged into war. President Eisenhower was represented as saying, The United States, is powerless to control developments.

We are willing and able to fight, the Congressmen were told, if it has to come to that. What Russia does in the next few days will tell the story.

Mr. Eisenhower himself made the essential points at the White House session. He was eloquent and assured. In past conferences involving domestic matters the President has sometimes seemed opaque and bored. But in the current crisis he was well prepared. His analysis was sharper than that of his subordinates.

The President opened and closed the conference, Herbert Hoover Jr., Acting Secretary of State in the absence of John Foster Dulles, read a prepared statement, and read it as his father used to read statements in press conferences—not effectively. He did not seem too well prepared.

Allen Dulles, younger brother of the Secretary of State and head of the Central Intelligence Agency, also gave a long schoolroom lecture which did not impress congressional leaders.

Difficult Red Movement

Adm. Arthur Radford, dynamic chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke of the logistic troubles the Russians would have in moving troops into the Suez area. He estimated it would take several weeks because of the distance, and because of the fact that Egypt is completely surrounded by non-Communist nations. He suggested Russia might be able to make a secret concentration inside Jordan along the Israeli border, then invade from that direction.

It was brought out that Russia already has technical equipment on hand in the Near East necessary to fight a war. That was why the British lost a plane over Syria flying at 45,000 feet. It could only have been brought down at that altitude with radar interceptor equipment, obviously supplied by Russia.

Heart of the White House briefing was summarized by the President as follows: We do not intend to give up the Middle East. What happens there is now up to Russia. There are three chief moves Russia could make:

1. Move in the Red army—which would mean war.
2. Move in volunteers—which

would not mean war. It would be serious but war could be avoided.

3. Let the United Nations police force settle the dispute.

Syria Is Gone

The opinion was expressed that the U. N. and the West had moved so fast to send a police force that they had caught Russia off base. It was believed that Moscow definitely intended to move troops, but the U. N. got there first. If Russia does not move by this week, peace will be preserved.

No matter what happens. However, the Congressmen were told Russia will end up with a new satellite—Syria. Already that country is Communist infiltrated.

Russia would have plenty of troops to move to Egypt, should that be Moscow's decision, the Congressmen were told, because the blood bath in Hungary has destroyed any chance of revolt in Poland, Czechoslovakia or East Germany. More troops will not be needed there.

Opening the Suez Canal will be much more difficult than the public realizes. Not only has it been blocked at both ends, but Congressmen were told the ship sunk in the middle was a converted LST loaded with quick-setting cement.

Congressional leaders who listened to this gloomy report included men from both political parties, all walks of life, all parts of the country: Clarence Cannon, Missouri; Carl Albert, Oklahoma; ex-Speaker Joe Martin, Massachusetts; Charlie Halleck, Indiana; 87-year-old Sen. Theodore Francis Green; Sen. William F. Knowland, California; John McCormack, Boston; Sen. Harry Byrd, Virginia; and so on.

Congressional leaders were franker in expressing the opinion that the United States should have done something to show anti-Communist Hungarians we were behind them. One suggested we should have given the Russians 12 hours' notice to withdraw Soviet troops, then recognized the rebel government of Hungary.

When Administration leaders were asked whether we would recognize the rebel government, the answer was absolutely no.

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